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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 000633

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DEPT FOR SCA/INS

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SUBJECT: SEVEN PARTIES URGE MAOISTS TO CALL OFF STRIKE

REF: A. KATHMANDU 379

[¶](#)B. KATHMANDU 468
[¶](#)C. KATHMANDU 597

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[¶](#)1. (U) As Maoist violence throughout the country continued, including an attack on the Ilam District headquarters killing 37 people, the leaders of the seven-party alliance urged the Maoists to call off their indefinite general strike planned to begin April 3. At the same time, the Parties reaffirmed their commitment to the 12-point understanding and sent senior Party leaders to India to "clarify" the Maoist stance on several issues. The Parties announced a massive rally in Kathmandu on April 8 to push for restoration of democracy, and condemned the government for continuing to detain 20 party and civil rights activists. End Summary.

Parties Urge Maoists to Call Off Strike...

[¶](#)2. (U) Following a meeting of senior alliance leaders at the residence of Nepal Congress (NC) leader GP Koirala on March 6, the seven-party alliance issued a statement expressing concern over the recent violent activities of the Maoists. The Party statement noted "we want to draw the serious attention of Maoists toward the ongoing activities of intimidation, extortion and abduction that they are carrying on with." (Note: Separately, business leaders meeting with the Ambassador on March 7 stressed that Maoists were blatantly extorting businesses throughout Nepal including Pokhara, and terai cities, leaving only business in Kathmandu to operate without constant threat of Maoist attack. End note.) The Party statement continued, "we urge the Maoists to stop preventing the displaced people from returning home." The Parties also appealed to the Maoists to call off their announced transport strike set for March 14-20 in district headquarters and Kathmandu and their indefinite general strike/closure planned to begin April 3 nationwide.

...Reaffirm Commitment to 12-Point Understanding

¶ 13. (U) Although the Parties expressed concern over Maoist actions, the seven-party alliance statement expressed full commitment to the November 12-point understanding with the Maoists. The statement noted that the Parties would "push forward with the understanding concretely and with more clarity." Meanwhile, newspapers reported that senior Party leaders, including United Marxist Leninist (UML) Central Committee Members Bam Dev Gautam and Jhala Nath Khanal and NC Central Committee Member and party spokesperson Krishna Prasad Sitaula, were in New Delhi on March 6 to start fresh negotiations with the Maoists. The front page of the March 7 English-language daily The Kathmandu Post quoted an unnamed seven-party leader as saying the discussion in India with the Maoists would seek "further interpretation, alteration, if any, and implementation" of the 12-point understanding. The article quoted Maoist politburo member Agni Prasad Sapkota a.k.a. "Kanchan" as saying that the Maoists and Parties would soon issue a joint appeal based on the 12-point agreement. He confirmed that the Maoists and the alliance leaders were in "serious" discussions over the pact, and noted that the Maoists were ready to show "maximum flexibility" not to break their understanding with the alliance. He promised that Maoists were "ready to hold talks over any problem" between the Parties and the Maoists.

Clarity Needed

¶ 14. (C) Sushil Koirala, NC Vice President, explained to Emboff that the seven-party alliance called for more "clarity" from the Maoists on the issue of the Maoist commitment to a multiparty system, press freedom, and freedom of movement for the Parties to conduct political activities in the villages. He explained that the Parties did not understand what the Maoists envisioned by calling for a parallel government and a parallel army (ref A) and so needed the Maoists to clarify that as well. Noting that the ongoing abductions and seizure of property by the Maoists had to stop, Koirala stated that the Parties would not work jointly with the Maoists if the Maoists did not renounce violence and disarm. KP Oli, UML Central Committee Member, told Emboff that the political parties needed to understand more clearly the Maoists' ideas regarding the management of arms and weapons. He explained that "the Maoists come out in the press with different versions regarding multiparty system and regarding the formation of the army" and so needed to "clarify" to the seven-party alliance what they mean by competitive politics, multiparty system, press freedom, and human rights.

Parties Call for April 8 Mass Capital-Centered Action...

¶ 15. (C) On March 6, the Parties announced a "capital-centered" protest program beginning April 8 to push for the complete restoration of democracy in the country. Sushil Koirala (NC) opined that the mass demonstration scheduled for April 8 in Kathmandu would be "huge" as the seven-party alliance had decided to send Central Committee Members from each party "to all the zones and districts" for political mobilization for 20 days beginning March 14. KP Oli (UML) told Emboff that he planned to talk with Pashupati Rana of the RPP and Surya Bahadur Thapa of the Rastriya Janashakti Party to seek their participation in the mass demonstration on April 8. Dhruba Bahadur Pradhan, Assistant General Secretary of the RPP (Rana), told Emboff that his party had yet to decide whether to take part in the April 8 mass protest.

...And Condemn the Government for Detentions

¶ 16. (U) The Parties called upon both the Maoists and the government to take into consideration the pain of the people caused by the ongoing conflict, and to end war, and return to peaceful negotiation. The Party leaders condemned the government for the ongoing detention of Party cadre including UML leader MK Nepal (house arrest), NC General Secretary Ram

Chandra Poudel, NC (D) Vice President Gopal Man Shrestha, and civil society activists Devendra Raj Panday and Krishna Pahadi. Local NGO Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC) told Emboff that the government was still detaining 20 political and civil activists.

¶ 17. (U) The March 6 meeting was the first gathering of seven party alliance leaders since the government released NC(D) leader Sher Bahadur Deuba from custody following the Supreme Court's ruling (ref B) that the Royal Commission on Corruption Control was unconstitutional. While Deuba had publicly expressed reservations about the 12-point understanding in the past, he refrained from making any public statements during the March 6 meeting, telling reporters, "I will speak at a time deemed necessary, but all will be for improving the pact, not destroying it." He continued, "movement, movement, movement - this is the only way out." He ruled out the possibility of "joining hands with the King," and told the press that his upcoming visit to the United States was at the invitation of Columbia University and not in response to "U.S. pressure."

Maoist Attack Kills 37 in Ilam

¶ 18. (C) Maoist violence throughout the country continued. The Defense Ministry reported that Maoists killed one soldier, two policemen, and two civilians in their March 5 attack on the Ilam District Headquarters in the tea growing region of Eastern Nepal. The Defense Ministry stated that security personnel fought off the Maoist attack on the Royal Nepalese Army barracks, District Police Office, and District Administration Office, killing 31 Maoists (other sources claimed only 8 Maoist deaths). Maoists succeeded in attacking the district jail, releasing 103 prisoners, including 32 Maoist cadre. The Maoists also damaged two ambulances in the attack. Embassy sources report that fighting continues along the border between Palpa and Nawalparasi Districts in western Nepal (ref C). On March 5, Maoists abducted large numbers of school children in Ramechhap District, east of Kathmandu. Maoists also set off bombs in the eastern terai Siraha District, and the central terai Sarlahi District, injuring civilians in both blasts.

Comment

¶ 19. (C) The seven-Party alliance's united call to the Maoists for clarity and a cease-fire will further pressure the Maoists. However, while the Maoists are in the middle of their campaign of violence, it is unclear whether this political pressure will make a difference absent any major military setback. The Parties' ability to get large numbers of people on the streets of Kathmandu on April 8 will depend on both the Maoists and the government allowing people to gather. Although the Parties remained committed to their 12-point understanding with the Maoists, their increasing wariness in dealing with the insurgents is apparent. The meeting in New Delhi could prove an indicator of where the Maoists and their erstwhile partners, the political parties, are headed.

MORIARTY